

Message Text

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ACTION AF-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 IO-13 IGA-02 PM-04 NSC-05 SP-02
SS-15 CIAE-00 INR-07 NSAE-00 EUR-12 NEA-10 EB-07
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R 121211Z JUL 77
FM AMEMBASSY MONROVIA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5460
INFO AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA
AMEMBASSY CONAKRY
AMEMBASSY FREETOWN
AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM
AMEMBASSY LOME
AMEMBASSY LUSAKA
USUN NEW YORK 524

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 MONROVIA 4761

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PORG, OAU, LI
SUBJECT: PRESIDENT TOLBERT'S POST-OAU MOOD

REF: STATE 159691 (NOTAL)

SUMMARY: FRESH FROM THE OAU SUMMIT PRESIDENT TOLBERT SUM-
MONED ME TO THE EXECUTIVE MANSION JULY 8 TO URGE EVER-
GROWING U.S. ROLE IN AFRICA, TO PASS ON A PLEA FROM SIERRA
LEONE'S SIAKA STEVENS FOR MILITARY ASSISTANCE, TO ELABORATE
ON THE OAU'S RECOGNITION OF THE PATRIOTIC FRONT AND TO URGE
USG ASSISTANCE TO THE FRONT.

1. PRESIDENT TOLBERT, WHO HAD OBVIOUSLY GIVEN MUCH THOUGHT
TO WHAT HE HAD TO SAY, BEGAN OUR MEETING WITH A QUERY. HE
SAID IN ESSENCE THAT AS A MODERATE WHO BELIEVES IN FREE
ENTERPRISE AND WHO ENJOYS A CERTAIN RESPECT IN AFRICA, HE
NEEDS TO HAVE A CLEARER IDEA OF U.S. INTENTIONS TOWARD
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AFRICA. HE SAID THAT AT THE OAU SUMMIT HE SENSED A FEEL-
ING AMONG THE AFRICAN LEADERS OF DISENCHANTMENT WITH
COMMUNISM, PARTICULARLY AMONG THOSE WHO HAVE FLIRTED WITH
IT. HE ADDED THAT WHILE THE SOVIETS STILL ARE CAPABLE
OF DOING MISCHIEF, THEY "WILL NOT MAKE IT IN AFRICA" BE-
CAUSE "COMMUNISM IS NOT RIGHT FOR US". COMING TO THE
MAIN POINT HE SAID THAT THE U.S., IF IT IS TO TAKE ADVAN-

TAGE OF THIS TREND AWAY FROM COMMUNISM, MUST PLAY AN INCREASINGLY ACTIVE ROLE IN AFRICA. WHILE HE DID NOT SPECIFY, HE OBVIOUSLY SAW THE TIME RIGHT NOT ONLY FOR INCREASED U.S. POLITICAL INFLUENCE IN AFRICA, BUT INCREASED ECONOMIC AND MILITARY ASSISTANCE AS WELL. "IF YOU WANT TO BUILD A MARBLE CASTLE," HE CONCLUDED, "YOU CAN BUILD A MARBLE CASTLE; IF YOU WANT TO BUILD A CHICKEN HOUSE YOU CAN BUILD A CHICKEN HOUSE".

2. TURNING MORE SPECIFICALLY TO HIS OWN ROLE IN AFRICA, AS HE SEES IT, TOLBERT SPOKE AT LENGTH ABOUT HIS COMMITMENT TO FREE ENTERPRISE, FREE TRADE AND OTHER WESTERN VALUES AND HOW AS 1979 APPROACHES (THE YEAR HE WILL BE OAU CHAIRMAN) HE NEEDS TO BE ABLE TO DEMONSTRATE TO HIS AFRICAN COLLEAGUES THAT HIS PHILOSOPHY BRINGS ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL JUSTICE TO THE COMMON MAN.

3. WITH THIS OPENING I ASKED TOLBERT IF THE QUESTION OF A CHANGE OF OAU HEADQUARTERS WAS DISCUSSED IN THE CORRIDORS. REPLYING AFFIRMATIVELY AND EMPHATICALLY, TOLBERT SAID SUDAN WAS TO HAVE RAISED THIS ISSUE PUBLICLY BUT DID NOT DO SO BECAUSE OF ITS OWN POLEMICS WITH ETHIOPIA. HE SAID THERE WAS NO QUESTION BUT WHAT THE MAJORITY OF AFRICA'S LEADERS WANT TO RELOCATE THE OAU HEADQUARTERS UNLESS THERE IS A RADICAL CHANGE IN MENGISTU AND THAT THE LEADING CANDIDATES FOR THE HEADQUARTERS ARE TOGO AND CONFIDENTIAL

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LIBERIA. HE ADDED THAT GABON HAD OFFERED ITS CANDIDACY BUT HAD WITHDRAWN IN FAVOR OF LIBERIA. HE ALSO MENTIONED TUNISIA, BUT EXPRESSED THE VIEW THAT NORTH AFRICA WAS OUT AS A VENUE FOR THE OAU HEADQUARTERS. HE SAID THAT SUDAN HAD NOT PRESENTED KHARTOUM AS A POSSIBLE SITE.

4. RETURNING TO THE THEME OF COMMUNIST INFLUENCE, HE SAID THAT, WHILE THE USG DID NOT KNOW IT, IT WAS RESPONSIBLE FOR GUINEA TURNING TO THE SOVIET UNION. HE SAID THAT WHEN THE FRENCH LEFT GUINEA TOURE WAS DESPERATE AND HAD ASKED FOR U.S. SUPPORT. HE SAID OUR GOVERNMENT'S RESPONSE WAS PROTRACTED AND NEGATIVE. IN THIS CONTEXT AND TURNING TO ONE OF THE MAIN POINTS OF THE MEETING, HE SAID THAT SIERRA LEONE, WHICH AT ONE POINT WAS MOVING TOWARD THE EAST, WAS NOW LOOKING TO THE WEST. SIKA STEVENS HAD ASKED HIM DURING OAU WHAT LIBERIA'S MILITARY RELATIONSHIP WITH THE UNITED STATES WAS AND, UPON HEARING THE ANSWER, ASKED TOLBERT TO INTERVENE WITH THE U.S. ON HIS BEHALF TO OBTAIN THE SAME KIND OF SECURITY RELATIONSHIP

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R 121211Z JUL 77
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5. LASTLY, TOLBERT WENT TO SOME LENGTHS, IF NOT ALTOGETHER CONVINCINGLY, TO EXPLAIN THE OAU DECISION TO SUPPORT THE PATRIOTIC FRONT. IN A NUT SHELL, TOLBERT SAID THAT THE REASON FOR THIS DECISION WAS TO AVOID THREE ARMIES FIGHTING FOR THE FREEDOM OF ZIMBABWE. HE SAID THIS HAD NOTHING TO DO WITH A SUBSEQUENT POLITICAL SETTLEMENT AND THAT THE OAU CHIEFS OF STATE HAD MADE IT QUITE CLEAR THAT SUPPORT OF THE PATRIOTIC FRONT MUST NOT INTERFERE IN THE FREE POLITICAL EXPRESSION OF ZIMBABWIANS OR PREORDAIN THEIR POLITICAL LEADERSHIP. HE ADDED THAT THE POLITICAL FUTURE OF ZIMBABWE OBVIOUSLY WOULD HAVE TO BE SOMETHING TO BE CONSIDERED BY THE OAU ONCE FREEDOM IS ATTAINED, THAT HE PERSONALLY WOULD BE "QUITE VOCAL ON THIS SUBJECT". FLESHING OUT WITH DETAILS TOLBERT (WHO CHAIRED THE OAU SESSIONS ON ZIMBABWE) SAID THAT FROM NOW ON THE TERM "ZIMBABWIAN ARMY" WILL BE USED TO DESCRIBE THE FIGHTING FORCES AS OPPOSED TO AN EARLIER CONSIDERED "ZIMBABWIAN PEOPLES ARMY". HE MUSED
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ABOUT MUZOREWA AND SITHOLE WHOM HE KNOWS WELL, AND SAID HE HAD LONG SINCE COUNSELED BOTH OF THEM TO JOIN THE

PATRIOTIC FRONT. HIS THEORY WAS THAT ALL ZIMBABWIAN SOLDIERS SHOULD FIGHT TOGETHER. AFTER VICTORY, THESE SOLDIERS WOULD BECOME CITIZENS OF ZIMBABWE, VOTING FOR THE LEADERS OF THEIR CHOICE. HE NOTED THAT HE HAD TALKED TO MUZOREWA BOTH BEFORE AND AFTER THE OAU DECISION ON THE PATRIOTIC FRONT ONCE AGAIN COUNSELING MUZOREWA TO JOIN UP WITH THAT FORCE. MUZOREWA, HE ADDED, GAVE HIM AN EQUIVOCAL ANSWER. FINALLY, HE ADMITTED, RECOGNIZING THE PF WAS A RISK BUT HE DESCRIBED IT AS THE LESSER OF TWO EVILS -- THE OTHER EVIL BEING THREE DIFFERENT LIBERATION ARMIES.

6. FINALLY, AND WITH CONSIDERABLE EMOTION, TOLBERT MADE A PLEA THAT THE USG GIVE ASSISTANCE TO PATRIOTIC FRONT. REPEATING A REFRAIN WE HAVE ALL HEARD FOR SO LONG, HE SAID MUGABE AND NKOMO WERE GETTING ALL THEIR ASSISTANCE FROM THE EAST AND THUS WOULD BE BEHOLDEN TO THE EAST ONCE INDEPENDENCE IN ZIMBABWE IS ACHIEVED. HE SAID HE WAS NOT ASKING FOR ARMS FROM THE U.S., ("LET THEM BUY ARMS WHEREVER THEY CAN GET THEM") BUT SOME GESTURE OF SUPPORT AND CONCERN -- BLANKETS, MEDICAL SUPPLIES, FOODSTUFFS. HE ADDED, AS HE OFTEN DOES WITH US, THAT HE WAS PREPARED TO BE THE GO-BETWEEN IF THE USG DESIRED.

7. COMMENT: IT IS CLEAR TOLBERT WAS BUOYED BY THE OAU SUMMIT, HAVING MADE MUCH THE SAME ANALYSIS AS THE DEPARTMENT (REFTEL). (WHEN TALKING ABOUT MONROVIA AS A POSSIBLE OAU HEADQUARTERS HE REMINISCED ABOUT THE MONROVIA/CASABLANCA GROUPINGS OF THE SIXTIES.) ON THE OTHER HAND, FROM HIS OWN PERCEPTION OF HIMSELF AS ONE OF THE CLOSEST FRIENDS THE U.S. HAS IN AFRICA, AND ONE WHO SHARES THE SAME VALUES, CONFIDENTIAL

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THERE WAS A NOTE OF FRUSTRATION OR ANXIETY THAT U.S. WOULD NOT TAKE ADVANTAGE OF THE OPPORTUNITIES BEING OFFERED IT BY THE MODERATE TREND IN AFRICA. HIS ASPIRATIONS TO BE RECOGNIZED AS A PREEMINENT MODERATE LEADER IN AFRICA HAVE NOT WANED, AND HE WILL BE SPENDING A LOT OF TIME AND THOUGHT ON CARVING OUT A NICHE AS OAU CHAIRMAN TWO YEARS FROM NOW. HIS WILLINGNESS TO CONVEY SIAKA STEVENS' REQUEST FOR MILITARY ASSISTANCE, TO PLEAD FOR U.S. ASSISTANCE TO THE ZIMBABWE FRONT FIGHTERS, AND HIS CONCERN THAT THE U.S. STEP UP ITS PRESENCE IN AFRICA, ALL POINT TO THE CONCLUSION THAT HE BELIEVES HIS FORTUNES WILL DEPEND AT LEAST IN PART ON WHAT WE DO IN AFRICA.

8. WITH REGARD TO ASSISTANCE TO SIERRA LEONE AND THE PATRIOTIC FRONT, I OF COURSE MADE NO COMMENT OTHER THAN TO NOTE I WOULD PASS THE REQUEST ON TO MY GOVERNMENT AND SEEK GUIDANCE.

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